

CONAN THE
BARBARIAN

MARVEL COMICS GROUP TM



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CONAN

THE BARBARIAN



the SHADOW of the VULTURE!

THE COMING OF CONAN!

APOLOGIA:

DUE TO CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND OUR (OR EVEN CROMBIE) CONTROL, WE ARE UNABLE TO BRING YOU THE CONAN STORY ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED FOR THIS ISSUE AND PROCLAIMED ON OUR COVER! (SEE THE FULL SAD SAGA ON THIS MONTH'S "HYBORIAN PAGE.")

MEANWHILE--FOR THOSE COUNTLESS MULTITUDES WHO MAY HAVE MISSED IT THE FIRST TIME AROUND--WE RE-PRESENT OUR EPOCH-MAKING PREMIER ISSUE!

MITRA BE WITH YOU--
AND US!

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BASED ON THE CHARACTER CREATED
BY ROBERT E. HOWARD

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IT IS SUMMER IN VANAHEIM, ONE OF THE NORTHERN-MOST OF ALL THE KNOWN OR UNKNOWN LANDS... AND THE LAST TRACES OF VAGRANT SNOW VANISH LIKE SOFTLY DYING DREAMS ON BOTH MOUNTAIN AND PLAIN...

BUT, THIS DAY, THE BLOOD-EYED SUN LOOKS DOWN ON THE SLASH AND SAVAGERY OF COMBAT... AS A RAIDING-PARTY OF AESIR DO BATTLE WITH THE FIERCE-BORN VANIR...

AND FOREMOST AMONG THE SKIRMISHING, ROARING BARBARIANS IS ONE WITH LOCKS OF DARKEST JET...

SPEAK YOUR PRAYERS, STRIPLING... FOR CAMP-SONGS ARE SUNG IN VANAHEIM OF THE PROWESS OF GONDUR.

MY LIFE IS FOR ME TO GIVE... NOT FOR YOU TO TAKE.

AND... I DO NOT CHOOSE TO GIVE IT.

YET, PERHAPS MEN SHALL SING ONE LAST SONG OF BOASTFUL GONDUR.

IF SO, THEY'LL SAY HE WAS THE FIRST MAN OF THE VANIR TO FALL BEFORE THE SLICING SWORD OF...

...CONAN THE CIMMERIAN!

CONAN THE CIMMERIAN! IN TIME TO COME, A NAME TO CONJURE WITH. BUT NOW, CONAN IS MERELY A MIGHTY-THEWED YOUTH, FRESH FROM HIS FIRST TASTE OF BATTLE AT VENARIUM-- AND BECOME A MERCENARY WITH THIS RAIDING-BAND FROM THE NEARBY BORDERS OF WIND-SWEPT AESGAARD...

THE SOUND OF STRIDENT SHOUTING DRAWS HIM TO THE EDGE OF THE RIDGE ON WHICH HE STANDS-- NOR DO HIS NIGHT-DARK EYES VIEW THE SCENE BELOW WITH FAVOR---

THAT **BEARDED** AESIR-- BESIEGED BY A TRIO OF YAPPING FOES!

NO AFFAIR OF MINE. I'VE DONE MY DAY'S WORK FOR AESIR GOLD.

STILL, WHY SHOULD ONE LION DIE... AND THREE JACKALS LIVE?

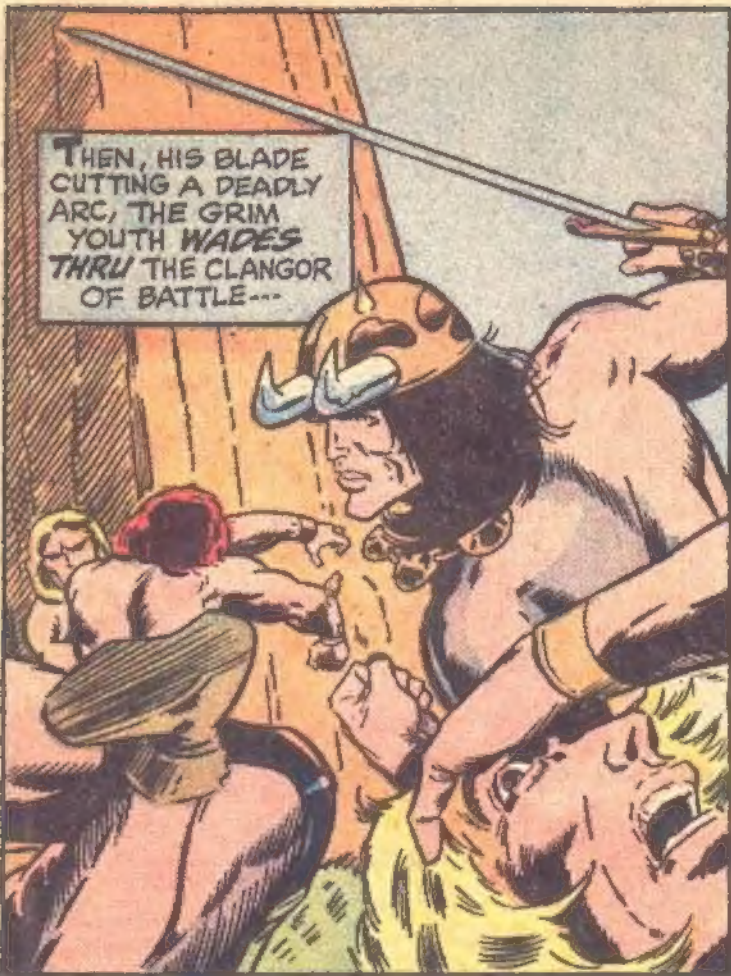


BY CROM! THEY SHOULD NOT--!



AND, BY CROM-- THEY SHALL NOT!!





THEN, HIS BLADE CUTTING A DEADLY ARC, THE GRIM YOUTH WADES THRU THE CLANGOR OF BATTLE---



... ALL THE TIME SEEING NOTHING SAVE THE VALIANT BEARDED AESIR AND THE THREE WHO BESET HIM---

HE IS DOWN! THE TALL ONE IS FALLEN!

THEN.. STRIKE.. FOR WE CANNOT HOLD HIM LONG--!

YOU VANIR DOGS! I'LL--



THE NEXT INSTANT-- A BOLT OF LIVING LIGHTNING-- AND TWO MEN OF VANAHEIM SHALL NEVER RISE AGAIN---

HAN! IF YOU CAN HANDLE TWO OF THESE PIGS, DARK-HAIR---

SURELY OLAV WILL HAVE NO TROUBLE WITH THE THIRD.

I NEVER THOUGHT YOU WOULD, MY FRIEND.



INSOLENT YOUTH! JUST BECAUSE YOU SAVED MY LIFE, DON'T DARE TO CALL ME FRIEND UNTIL I TELL Y--

WAIT! WHAT IS IT THE OTHERS ARE SHOUTING?



THEY'RE FLEEING.
THEN-- WE'VE WON!

THAT'LL TEACH
THOSE RED-HAIR
SCUM TO COME SNEAK-
ING OVER OUR BORDERS
-- WHEN THEY CAN'T EVEN
DEFEND THEIR OWN.

LET'S GO
AFTER
THEM--!



DON'T
CHASE
THEM! LET
THEM RUN!

HE'S RIGHT, LADS.
FIRST WE BIND OUR
WOUNDS AND BURY
OUR DEAD.

TIME ENOUGH THEN
TO CARRY THE FIGHT
TO THE DOGS' OWN CAMP.



YOU TAKE COMMAND
QUICKLY, BOY, FOR ONE
I SAW JOIN OUR PARTY
ONLY *THIS MORNING*...
BUT YOU DON'T SEEM TO
KNOW IT'S OLAV WHO
GIVES THE ORDERS HERE.

WHAT
IS YOUR
NAME?

I AM CONAN...
A CIMMERIAN.



AND A YOUNG ONE,
AT THAT. YOU'RE A
LONG WAY FROM
HOME, BOY.

GOT THE WANDERLUST,
EH? WELL, YOU SAVED MY
WEATHERED HIDE, SURE
ENOUGH-- AND HERE'S
MY HAND FOR IT!

TELL ME-- WHY'D YOU
JOIN OUR BAND,
INSTEAD OF THEIRS?
WE BOTH PAY OFF IN
GOOD NORTHERN
GOLD.

BUT YOU
AESIR PAY
MORE.



AN HONEST CIMMERIAN, EH?
WELL, OLAV LIKES THAT.

NOW, I FIGURE THAT THOSE DOGS
WILL STOP TO REST IN THAT PASS
YONDER... SO WE'LL CLIMB AROUND
AND ATTACK THEM FROM ABOVE.

WHAT THINK YOU OF
THAT, LAD?

YOU PAY... SO
YOU LEAD.

YOU KNOW,
CONAN... I
THINK
PERHAPS
YOU ARE
TOO HONEST.

AND
BESIDES
... YOU
TALK
TOO MUCH.

WHILE, NOT FAR DISTANT,
BEHIND HASTILY-ERECTED
DEFENSES, THE BONE-
WEARY MEN OF VANAHEIM
WEIGH THEIR CHANCES...

ANOTHER
STRAGGLER
--- BEARING
HIS DEAD
COMRADE.

CURSED BE
THE DAY WE FIRST
LOOTED THE BORDER
TOWNS OF
AESGAARD!

SOFT, LAD-- LEST
YOUR GRUMBLING
REACH THE EARS OF
VOLFF HIMSELF.

THIS MORNING WE **OUT-
NUMBERED** OUR FOEMEN.
NOW, OUR FORCES ARE
HALVED.

AND, APART FROM HIS MEN SITS
THEIR LEADER... TALL AND LITHE, HIS
MIND ALIVE WITH THE WILD CUNNING OF
THE BEAST WHOSE HIDE HE WEARS...
THE WILY **VOLFF!**

THE MEN GROW
RESTIVE, MIGHTY
ONE-- **FEARFUL...**

AND NOT WITHOUT
CAUSE, HOTHAR.

WITH GONDUR DEAD,
WE HAVE **NO WARRIOR**
WHO CAN STAND
AGAINST GRIM **OLAV...**
OR THE DARK-HAIRED
CUR WHO **SAVED**
HIM.

BUT, JUST BECAUSE
THEY MUST DIE,
HOTHAR...

DOES IT
FOLLOW
THAT **WE**
MUST PERISH
WITH THEM?

I SEE YOUR
MEANING,
GREAT **VOLFF...**

MEN OF THE NORTHLANDS,
HEED MY WORDS. HOTHAR AND
I GO TO CALL UPON THE
GODS, TO SEEK THEIR
FAVOR THIS DAY.

YOU WILL REMAIN
HERE, UNTIL THE
HOUR WHEN WE
RETURN.

MY MEN ARE
CUTTHROATS,
BUT NOT
STUPID ONES.

THEY KNOW FULL
WELL THAT ERE THE
SUN SETS, THEY'LL
HOLD THIS GORGE
WITH THEIR **LIFE'S**
BLOOD!

AY,
VOLFF...



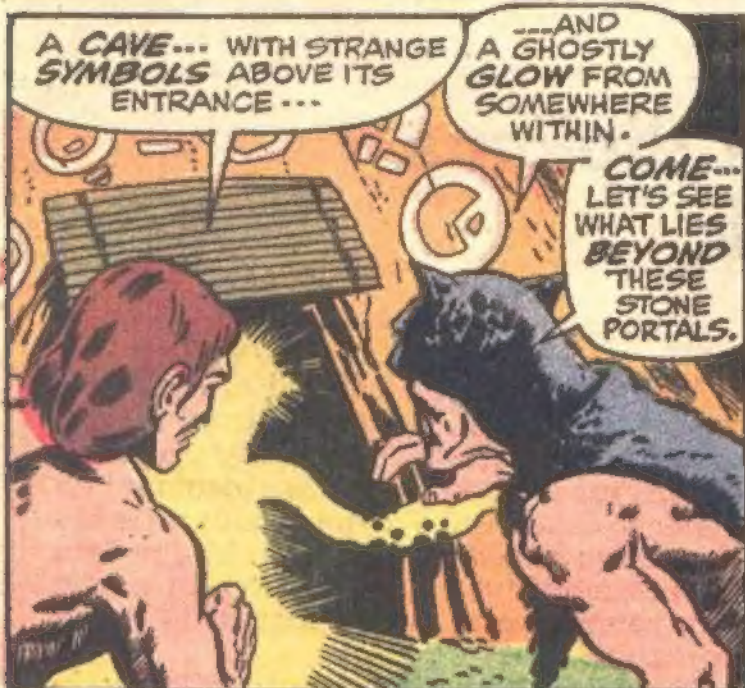
---YOU SAID OUR MEN WEREN'T FOOLS, GREAT VOLFF.

THEY'LL FLEE, AFTER THEY'VE MULLED IT OVER LONG ENOUGH.

YET, DID CATTLE EVER AWAIT SLAUGHTER MORE WILLINGLY?

BUT EVEN THEN, THEY'LL FORM A **BUFFER** BETWEEN US AND THE VENGEFUL **AESIR**.

HO! WHAT'S **THIS** I SEE BEFORE ME?



A CAVE... WITH STRANGE SYMBOLS ABOVE ITS ENTRANCE...

---AND A GHOSTLY GLOW FROM SOMEWHERE WITHIN.

COME... LET'S SEE WHAT LIES BEYOND THESE STONE PORTALS.



ENTER, VOLFF. ENTER, HOTHAR.

I HAVE BEEN --- WAITING FOR YOU.



AN OLD MAN, AS THIN AS DEATH ITSELF... AND A YOUNG GIRL!

WHO ARE THEY, TO DWELL IN THESE LONELY HILLS... AND HOW DID THE OLD ONE KNOW OUR NAMES?

THAT WE'LL LEARN, HOTHAR, WHEN WE **ACCEPT** THEIR INVITATION.

PERHAPS THEY CAN GUIDE US **THRU** THESE MOUNTAINS... TO A PLACE WHERE OUR PURSUERS CAN **NEVER** FIND US.

FOLLOW ME.. BUT BE ON GUARD FOR **AESIR** TRICKERY.

YOU'LL FIND NO GOLD-TRESSED TREACHERY HERE, WILY ONE.

MY HAIR, WHEN I DID HAVE IT, WAS **SCARLET** AS YOUR OWN.

BY THE GODS! THIS PLACE IS A CAVE WITHOUT... AND A TEMPLE WITHIN.

IF NAUGHT ELSE, WE CAN HIDE HERE FOR A TIME.

I STILL SAY... **BEWARE!**

AND I SAY, SCOFFER, THAT YOU NEED NOT FEAR **SHARKOSH**... HE WHO IS CALLED **THE SHAMAN!**

YOUR COMING WAS **FORETOLD** ME IN A VISION I HAD, WHEN LAST I GAZED INTO YONDER **STAR-STONE**.

YEARS AGO, IT FELL FROM THE MANY-JEWELED **SKY**...

THEN, PERHAPS YOU CAN CALL UP FORCES WHICH MAY YET BRING ME **VICTORY!?**

THAT I CAN... FOR A PRICE.

I HAVE NEED OF A STRONG YOUNG **WARRIOR CAPTIVE**... FAR MIGHTIER THAN EITHER OF YOU.

THERE BE SUCH AMONG YOUR **FOEMEN**, NO?

AY. YOUR WORDS WOULD BEST FIT A YOUTHFUL **DARK-HAIR** WHO BATTLES ON THE SIDE OF THE **AESIR**.

BUT TELL ME... WITH THE POWERS YOU SAY YOU HAVE, WHY DO YOU NEED SUCH A ONE?

THAT IS MY AFFAIR.

SUFFICE IT TO SAY, IT CONCERNS THE BEAUTEOUS **HANDMAIDEN** WHO SITS BESIDE ME...

... SHE WHOSE SMILE HAS MADE MORE **BEARABLE** AN OLD MAN'S SELF-EXILE.

WELL? ARE MY TERMS **AGREED TO?**

WHAT HAVE I TO LOSE? **UN-LEASH** YOUR PHANTOM ARMY!

I HAVE NO NEED OF A FULL ARMY, MAN OF THE **VANIR**.

NOW BE **SILENT**... AND YOU WILL OBSERVE MARVELS SUCH AS ARE **WHISPERED** ABOUT, OVER SLOWLY-DYING CAMPFIRES...!

SPECIAL HYBORIAN PAGE PIN-UP!

(SEE OUR LETTERS PAGE FOR THE STORY BEHIND THIS ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME WONDER--WHICH COMES DIRECT FROM **BARRY (THE BARBARIAN) SMITH** TO CONAN-BOOSTERS THE WORLD OVER!)



THEN, FROM THE OLD SHAMAN'S LIPS HISSES AN INCANTATION THAT WAS OLD WHEN ATLANTIS SANK... A SPELL SUCH AS ONCE WAS MUTTERED AMONG THE PURPLE-TOWERED CITIES OF ANCIENT, EVIL ACHERON.

A LIVING FIRE SEEMS TO GROW, UNBANKED, WITHIN THE SKY-SENT JENEL... AN EERIE, PUTRID GLOW FILLS EACH CREVICE OF THE ROCK-HEWN CHAMBER...

..AND THEN, THE STAR-STONE BEGINS TO HUM...!

THE VANIR SKULK ABOUT BELOW, SUSPECTING NOTHING.

YOU WERE WISELY CHOSEN TO AVENGE THE RECENT BORDER RAIDS, OLAV.

BUT WHY DO YOU SCOWL SO?

BECAUSE, STRIPLING, THEIR LEADER VOLFF IS NOT AMONG THEM.

HE MUST HAVE FLED, HIS NOSE SNIFFING DISASTER IN THE WIND.

HOW CAN THE ESCAPE OF ONE LONE FOE MAR YOUR JOY, OLAV?

YOU DON'T KNOW HIM, CONAN.

AS LONG AS HE LIVES, NO AESIR CAN SLEEP WITH BOTH EYES CLOSED.

STILL, WE OF AESGAARD HAVE A SAYING: "IF THE WOLF BE NOT AT HOME WHEN YOU COME TO CALL..."

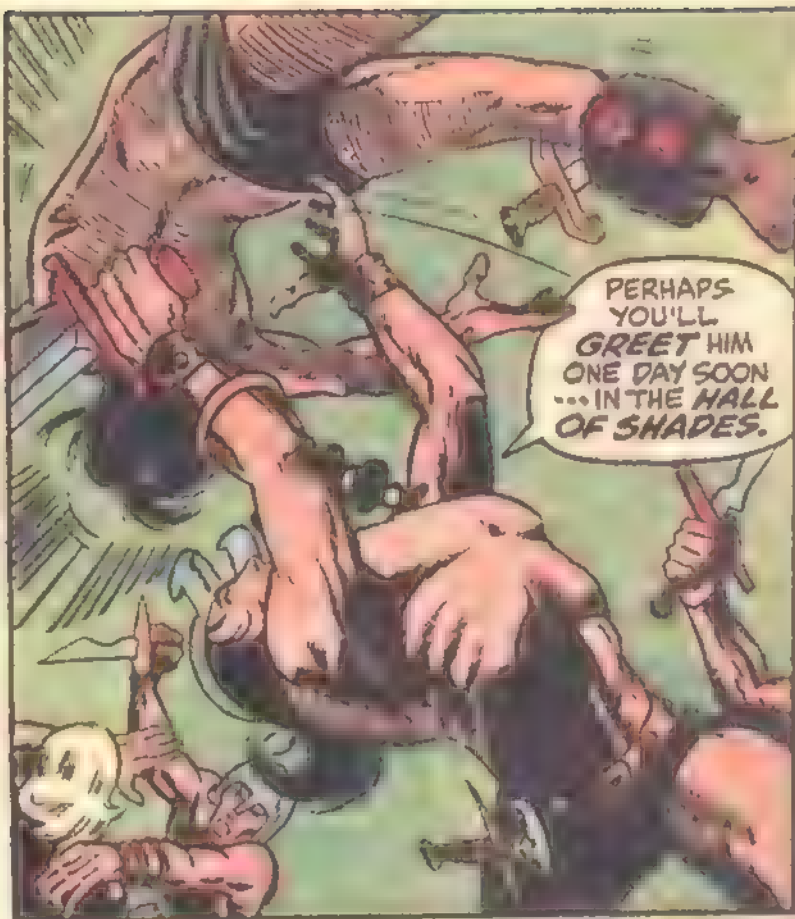
"...THEN SLAY ITS PUPS!"

ATTACK, MY BROTHERS!

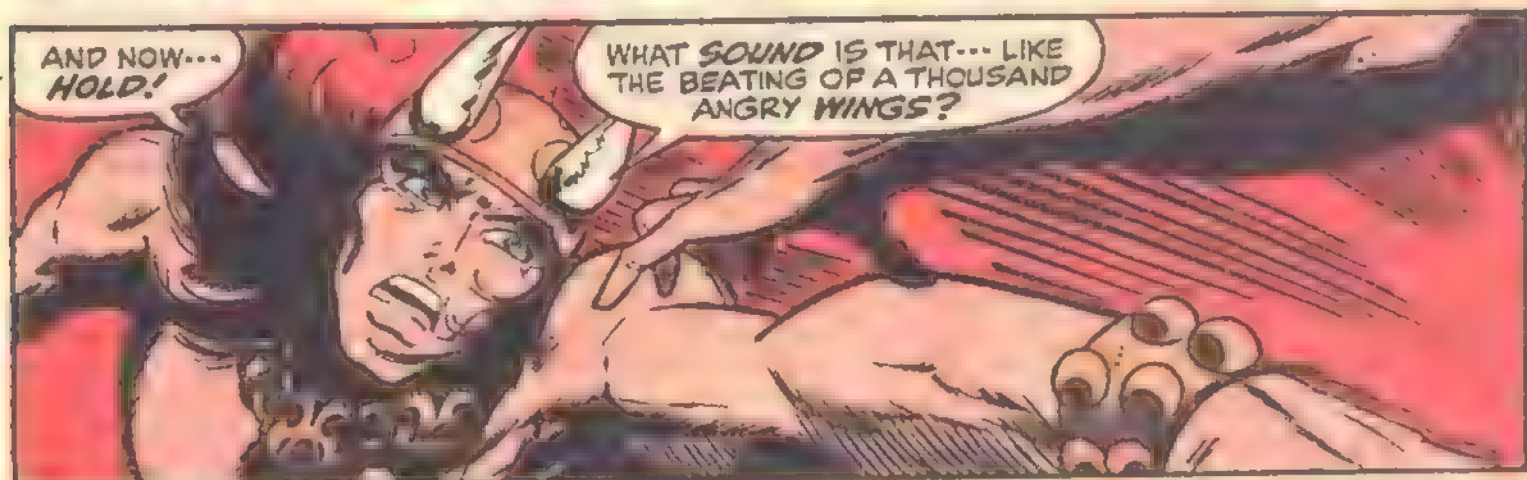


**THE AESIR
HAVE FOUND US!**

**VOLFF!
WHERE IS
VOLFF
THE WILY?**



**PERHAPS
YOU'LL
GREET HIM
ONE DAY SOON
...IN THE HALL
OF SHADES.**



**AND NOW...
HOLD!**

**WHAT SOUND IS THAT... LIKE
THE BEATING OF A THOUSAND
ANGRY WINGS?**



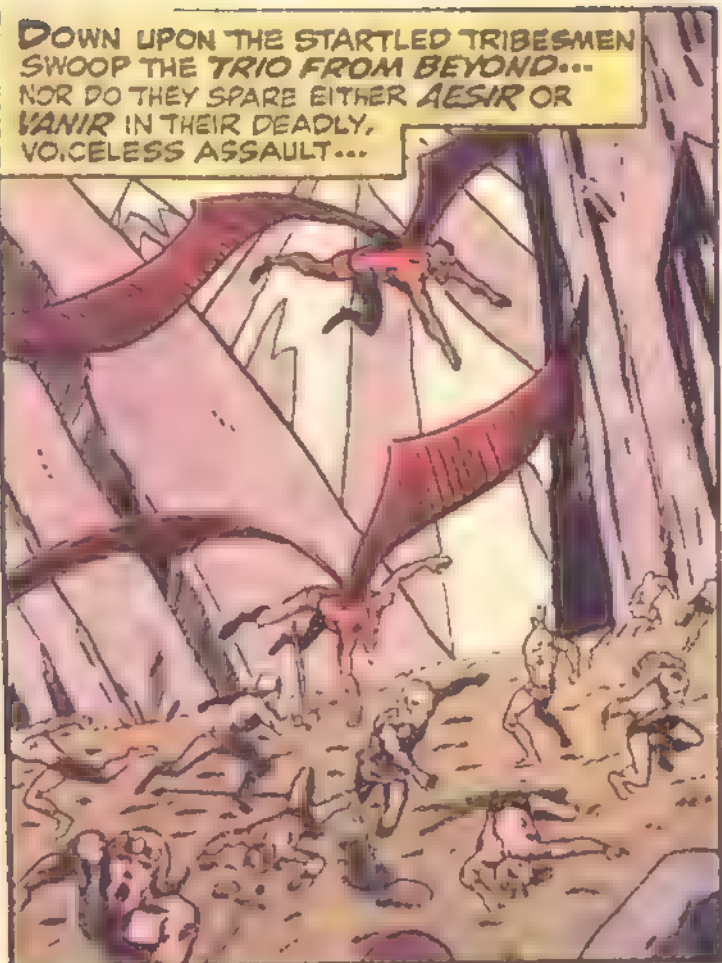
**NOT A THOUSAND,
YOUTH... ONLY
THREE PAIRS...
BUT FIXED TO
THE BODIES OF
MONSTERS!**

**LOOK, THERE
IN THE HEAVENS--
AT THE HORRID
DEMON-HORDE
WHICH DESCENDS
UPON US!**

CROM!

**FLEE!
WHAT MAN-FORGED
BLADE CAN FEND
OFF BAT-WINGED
DEVILS?**

DOWN UPON THE STARTLED TRIBESMEN
SWOOP THE TRIO FROM BEYOND...
NOR DO THEY SPARE EITHER AESIR OR
VANIR IN THEIR DEADLY,
VOICELESS ASSAULT...



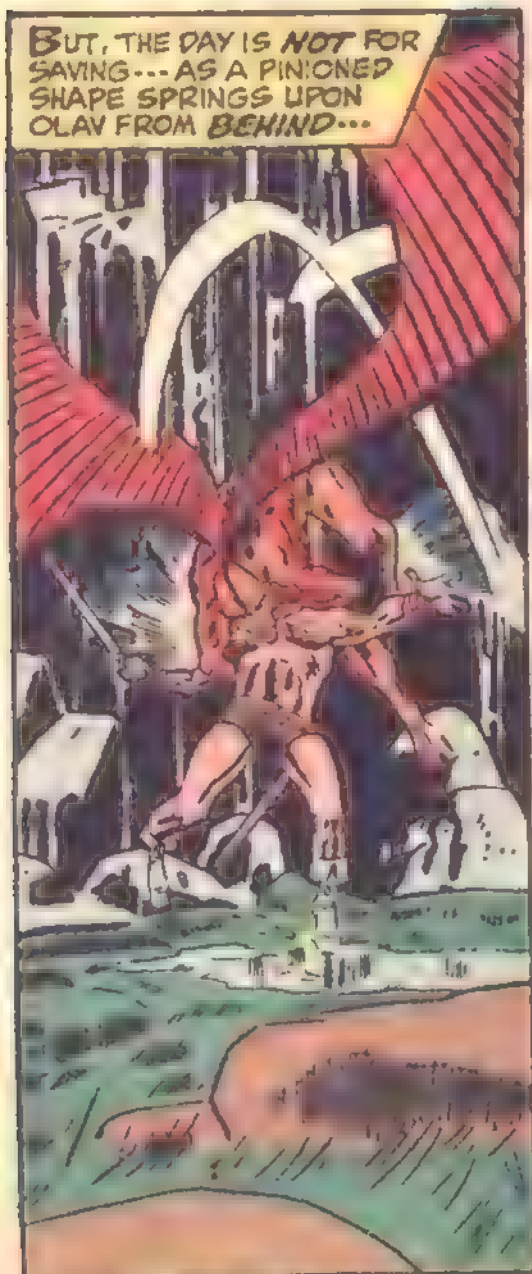
YET, ONE MAN STANDS
HIS GROUND, AND IS REWARD-
ED BY A CRY SUCH AS NO
LIVING MAN HAS HEARD...

THE THINGS CAN
BE HURT!

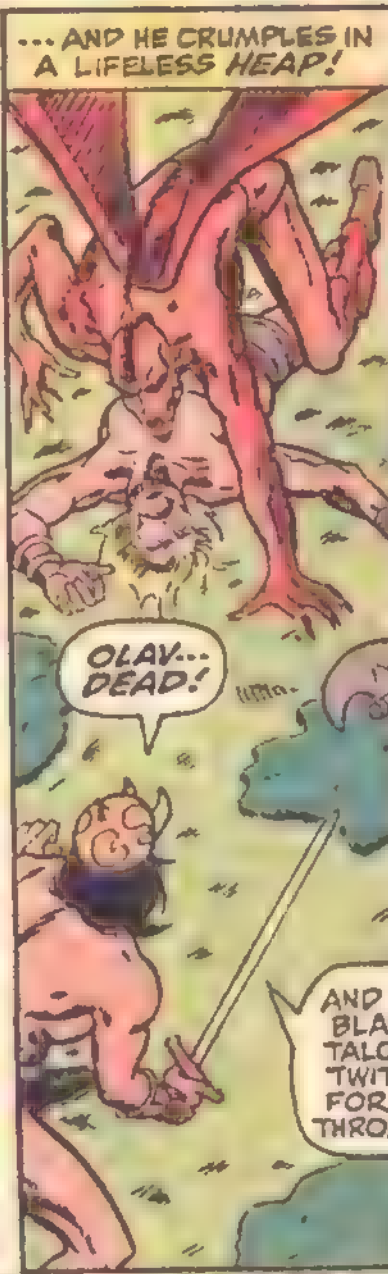
THEN TO
ME, LADS
...WE'LL
STILL
SAVE THE
DAY!



BUT, THE DAY IS *NOT* FOR
SAVING... AS A PINIONED
SHAPE SPRINGS UPON
OLAV FROM BEHIND...



...AND HE CRUMPLES IN
A LIFELESS HEAP!



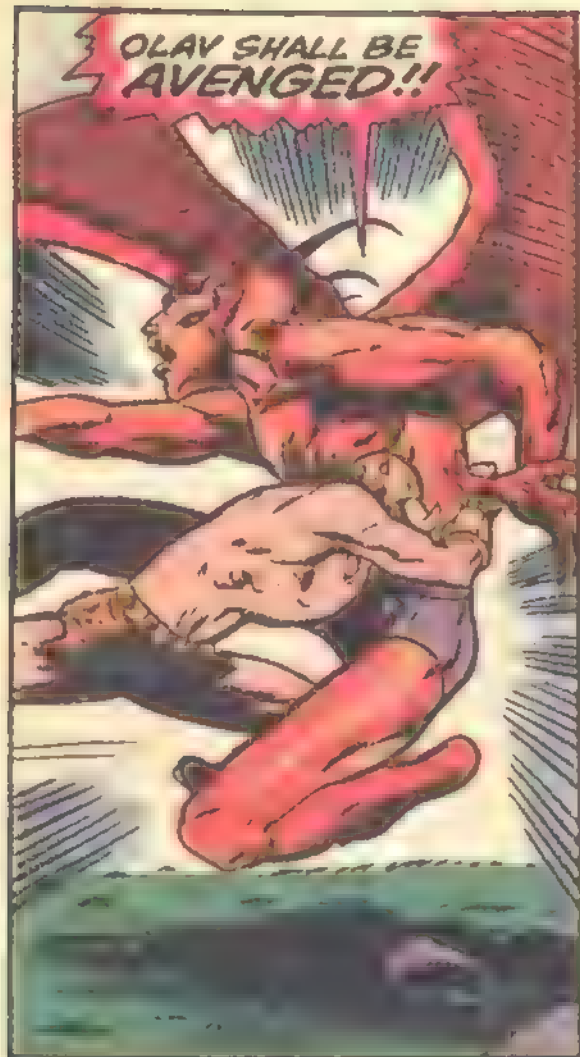
OLAV...
DEAD!

FOR THE PAST FEW FATEFUL
SECONDS, YOUNG CONAN HAS HELD
BACK FROM THE ONE-SIDED BATTLE
...FOR, ABOVE ALL ELSE, THE
BARBAROUS CIMMERIANS DO FEAR
THINGS SUPERNATURAL! BUT
NOW, AT THE SIGHT OF A VALIANT
LIFE SNUFFED OUT LIKE THE MEREST
CANDLE, THE FEAR-SPELL IS BROKEN..!

BE YOU DEMON OR
DIVINE-- HEAVEN-
SENT OR SPANNED
IN HELL...

AND NOW,
BLACK
TALONS
TWITCH
FOR MY
THROAT.

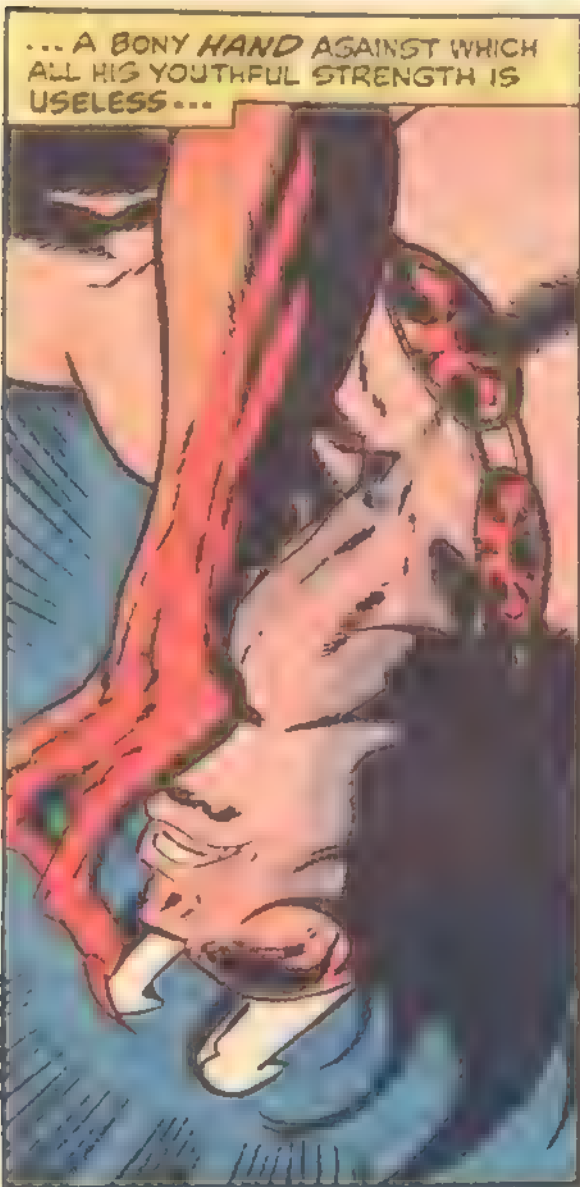




OLAV SHALL BE AVENGED!!



BUT THE BARBARIAN'S ONLY ANSWER IS THE FORCEFUL FLAPPING OF TWO DARK WINGS ... A SUDDEN SENSATION OF WEIGHTLESSNESS WHICH LOOSENS HIS SWORD-GRIP...



... A BONY HAND AGAINST WHICH ALL HIS YOUTHFUL STRENGTH IS USELESS...



... THEN, THE FEELING OF BEING DROPPED, LIKE SOME BROKEN RAG DOLL, TOWARDS PEAKS ON WHICH A BLANKET OF SNOW STILL LINGERS---

...AND FINALLY, A NAMELESS, ALL-CONSUMING BLACKNESS!

AN ETERNITY LATER, CONAN DRIFTS BACK TO THE WAKING WORLD, ESCORTED BY THE TOUCH OF SOFT FINGERS... THE WAFTING TRACE OF AN EXOTIC SCENT... THE CARESS OF A GIRL'S HUSHED VOICE.

ARISE, YOUNG BARBARIAN. YOUR TIME IS ALMOST COME.

WHO CALLS CONAN... BACK FROM THE PLACE OF DREAMS?

I AM TARA-- SO-CALLED BY THE GREAT SHAMAN.

SHAMAN? AM I, THEN, THE PRISONER OF A SORCERER?

YOU SPEAK QUICKLY TO THE POINT. MY MASTER IS PERHAPS A SORCERER OF SORTS... BUT HIS POWERS ARE NOT TRULY HIS OWN.

THEY ALL DERIVE FROM THE STAR-STONE... WHICH FORETOLD EVEN THAT YOU WOULD BE DELIVERED UNTO US.

WHAT DOES HE WANT OF ME? AM I TO BE SACRIFICED UPON SOME PAGAN ALTAR?

NO, HANDSOME ONE. THERE SHALL BE NO SACRIFICE... BUT ONLY A TRADE.

A TRADE? BUT WHAT--?

SAY NO MORE, BUT KEEP SILENCE.

WITHOUT YON WOODEN BARS, THE CEREMONY BEGINS...

THEN, CONAN'S BLOOD RUNS COLD AS HE BEHOLDS ANEW THE WINGED DEMONS... NEAR THEM, TWO SMIRKING VANIR... AND A WIZENED OLD ONE WHO CAN ONLY BE... THE SHAMAN.

O STAR-STONE... SACRED JEWEL WHICH FELL LIKE RAIN FROM ON HIGH...

THE VANIR-MEN BE STILL SCOFFERS... NOT TRUE BELIEVERS IN YOUR AWESOME POWER.

GIVE US A SIGN OF THAT POWER, SO THAT THE CEREMONY OF TRANSFERAL MAY BE ACCOMPLISHED.

THEN, BEFORE THE AMAZED EYES OF VANIR AND CIMMERIAN ALIKE, A VISION FILLS THE DARK-ENED CHAMBER-- A SCENE OF A WORLD-THAT-ONCE-WAS...



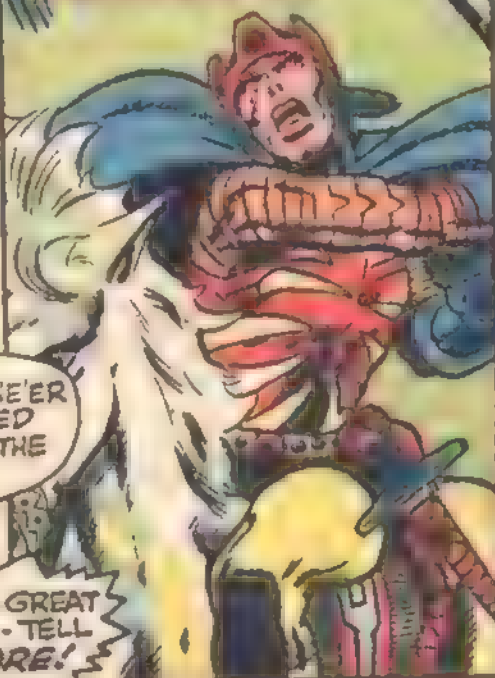
BEHOLD VALUSIA... MIGHTIEST MAINLAND KINGDOM IN THE DAYS BEFORE ATLANTIS SANK.

EVEN I HAVE NE'ER BEFORE DELVED SO FAR INTO THE PAST.

MORE, GREAT STONE... TELL US MORE!

YES, SHAMAN AND SAVAGES... GAZE DEEPLY... SEE THE LATTER DAYS OF VALUSIA, WHEN THE LAND WAS OFT RULED BY BARBARIAN MONARCHS...

... AND WHEN THE GREATEST OF THESE USURPERS WAS THE OUTCAST ATLANTEAN...
KING KULL!

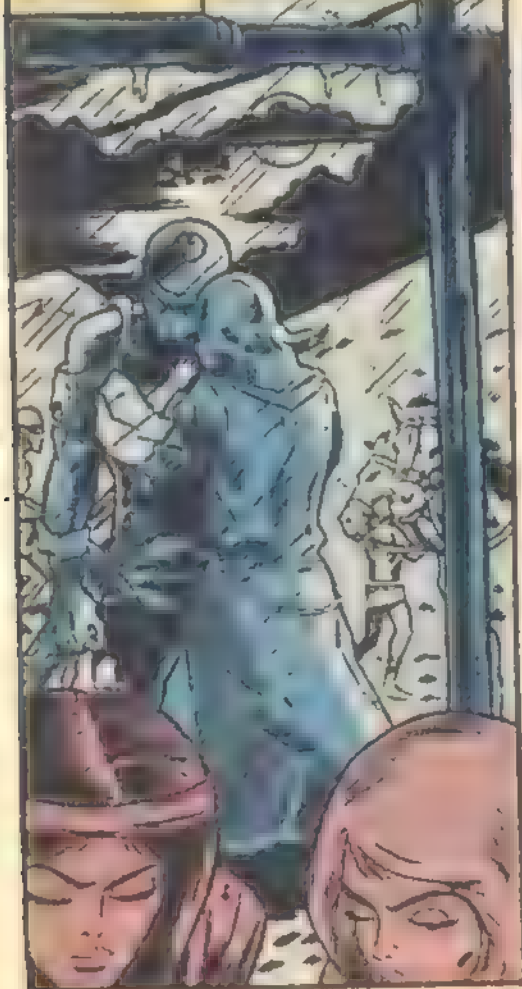


WATCH IN HORROR NOW, AS THE CATAclysm ROCKS THE WORLD... AS EARTHQUAKES AND VOLCANOES CHANGE THE FACE OF A PLANET... AS VALUSIA HERSELF FADES INTO LEGEND...



... AND THE THIRST-CRAZED OCEANS DRINK THE ISLAND MEN CALLED ATLANTIS!

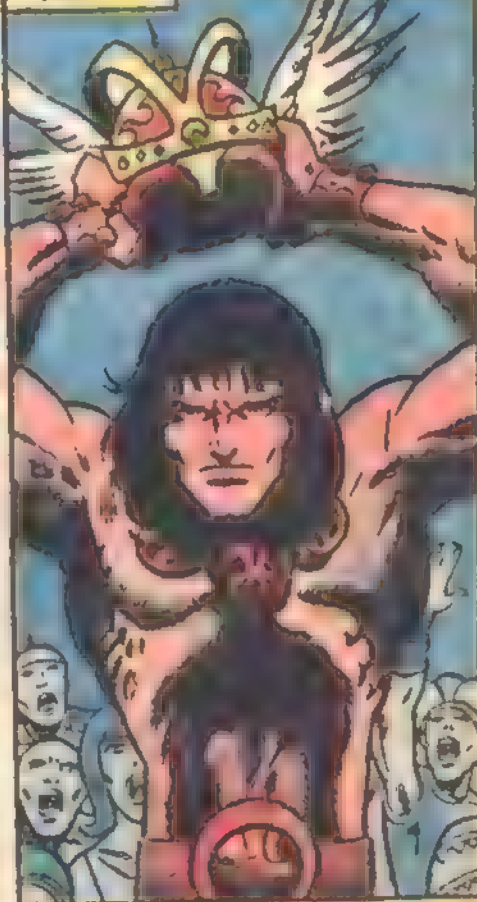
NEXT, BEHOLD A BABY BORN NOT TWENTY WINTERS AGO... ON A BATTLEFIELD IN CIMMERIA, AMID A RAID BY THE FEARSOME VANIR...



LOOK UPON THAT BABE, NOW GROWN TO YOUNG MANHOOD... RECEIVING HIS BAPTISM OF FIRE AND SWORD AT DISTANT VENARIUM, BUT A WINTER GONE...



AND NOW, BE WITNESS TO THE MOST AWESOME SIGHT OF ALL...



... AS THIS BARBARIAN, AMIDST A HAILING POPULACE, CROWNS HIMSELF KING OF A MIGHTY HYBORIAN EMPIRE!

THE HYBORIAN PAGE

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SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT:

Well, it finally happened!

As we've been telling you for months, it's been a terrific strain for Roy, Barry, and our hard-pressed, hard-working inkers to turn out an issue of CONAN THE BARBARIAN each and every month. Time after time, the ever-demanding deadline has forced them to take desperate measures — including one issue reproduced partly from pencils, another finished up from Barry's layouts by no less than four penciler/inkers.

But this time, Fate as well went against them — and you.

At the last minute — and believe it when we say we mean just that! — no less than thirteen pages of the 21-page spectacular planned for this issue went lost in the mail, necessitating either a reprint of an earlier CONAN issue — or the substitution of a few "Conan-presented" sword-and-sorcery tales gathered from earlier Marvel mags. There wasn't even time to change the now-accidentally-misleading cover, since it was printed long before the loss could have been anticipated. (And please, people — don't tell us we should simply have skipped putting out an issue at all this month. Nothing would have pleased Roy and Barry more — but, once printing schedules are definitely set up, that becomes impossible. By legal contract, Marvel had to put out something called CONAN THE BARBARIAN this month — even if the mag had been completely filled with re-runs of Millie the Model! No lie!)

Anyway, faced with this dilemma, we decided to make the best of a bad deal by doing what hundreds of readers have begged us to do anyway, over the past couple of years: We've re-presented that first, epoch-making issue of CONAN — the star-crossed saga which started this award-winning title on its wandering way to greatness, and which in turn helped to launch a whole new passle of comics titles (including, one way or another, KULL THE CONQUEROR, the upcoming THONGOR OF LOST LEMURIA and even WAR OF THE WORLDS, the current adaptations in our macabre mystery mags, DOC SAVAGE — and a couple of projects by our Distinguished Competition, as well). Nor is the end in sight.

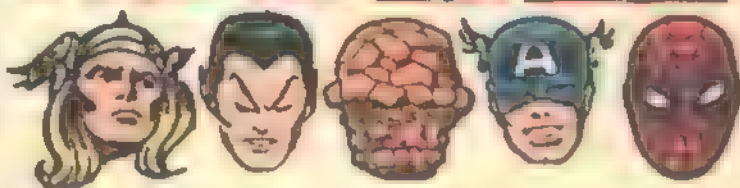
And, since we're not really trying to rip-off you CONAN completists out there, we thought we'd reproduce (for the first time anywhere!) a landmark pin-up as well — a full-page phantasmagoria of a barbarian hero penciled and inked by Barry two or three years back, as a warm-up for the CONAN mag. We hope it'll ease the blow just a bit to those of you who picked up this ish on the basis of the cover — and then discovered you already possess a copy of the story inside (for which entrepreuneuring comics dealers are already asking and getting!) as much as \$5 per copy!

And, don't worry — we're already hard at work (with the aid of some xeroxed layouts we had lying around) on filling in those missing unlucky-13 pages, so that next issue — with a new cover, natch! — you can finally behold "The Shadow of the Vulture" lying heavy over the Hyborian Age!

There! We hope we explained everything as painlessly as possible — and we'll reiterate that we're taking

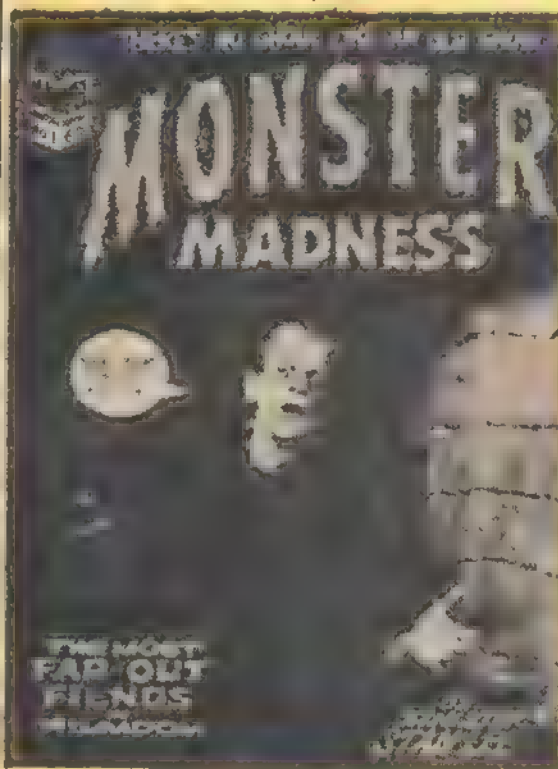
steps to see that it never happens again! It was nobody's fault — not Barry's, not Roy's, not scheduled inker Dan Adkins', not even mixed-up Marvel's, for a change — just a freak of Nature and the sorely-confused U.S. Post Office. And those are two awesome entities, friend, that not even a Cimmerian swordsman could take on single-handed!

MARVEL



MONSTERS!

MADNESS! and MIRTH!



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WILDEST
PHOTOS!

THE
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MAG
YOU'VE EVER
SEEN
AT!

ONLY \$1.00 FOR
64 PAGES
OF UNENDING
MERRIMENT!
(IN LIVING
BLACK AND
WHITE!)

ON SALE
NOW!

(CAUSE YOU KNOW
WE HATE COMING TO
OUR SENSES!)

KNOW YE THESE, THE HALLOWED RANKS OF MARVELDOM:

R.F.O. (Real Frantic One) — A buyer of at least 3 Marvel mags a month.
T.T.B. (Titanic True Believer) — A divinely-inspired 'No-Prize' winner.
Q.N.S. (Quite 'Nuff Sayer) — A fortunate frantic one who's had a letter printed.

K.O.F. (Keeper Of the Flame) — One who recruits a newcomer to Marvel's rollickin' ranks.
P.M.M. (Permanent Marvelite Maximus) — Anyone possessing all four of the other titles.
F.F.F. (Fearless Front-Facer) — An honorary title bestowed for devotion to Marvel above and beyond the call of duty.

HOLD!

'TIS NOT THE
PAST WE SEE
NOW-- BUT THE
FUTURE.

YET, THE
CIMMERIAN CAN
HAVE NO FUTURE
--FOR HE IS TO BE
OFFERED UP IN
THE **CEREMONY**
OF TRANSFERRAL.

I MUST SEE
MORE... STILL MORE!

WHILE, NEARBY,
YOUNG CONAN WASTES
FEW PRECIOUS MOMENTS
TRYING TO FATHOM
THE MYSTERIES OF
TIME AND SPACE...

... BUT CONTINUES
TO TEST THE **BARS**
OF HIS MAKESHIFT
PRISON.

AND STILL THE VISIONS **DANCE MADLY**
ON... REVEALING MAN HURLED BACK INTO
AN AGE OF STONE, AND BEGINNING ANEW
HIS SLOW, UPWARD **CLIMB...**

...TOWARDS WONDERS **UNDREAMED-OF**
EVEN IN THIS, THE HEIGHT OF
THE **HYBORIAN AGE.**

BY THE GODS! I
SEEM TO BEHOLD
FAR-OFF STYGIA...
UNDER ANOTHER
NAME... IN AN
OTHER TIME.

I MUST
SEE MORE..
I MUST KNOW
MORE! MORE!

STOP, OLD
MAN! YOU
ARE GOING
--- **TOO**
FAR!

WE WERE NOT
MEANT TO
LOOK ON
THINGS LIKE
THIS-- **BEFORE**
THEIR TIME.

BUT THE WIDE-EYED SHAMAN
KEEPS NOT... AS THE IMAGE
OF MAN'S **ULTIMATE**
CONQUEST FLOODS
THE PIT-DARK CHAMBER...
AND THE EARTH, THE
CENTER OF PRIMITIVE
MAN'S SMALL UNIVERSE,
IS LEFT **FAR, FAR**
BEHIND!

VOLFF...
WHAT **MADNESS**
IS THIS? THE STARS
-- THE STARS...!

THESE SIGHTS
-- HAVE DRIVEN
THE OLD MAN
MAD!

AAAAARRRRRR!

THEN, EVEN AS THAT CRY STILL ECHOES---

CONAN--
STOP!

YOU'LL BE
SLAIN--!

THEN LET ME
DIE A WARRIOR'S
DEATH---

--- NOT
PENNEED UP
LIKE SOME
SHEEP
RIPE FOR
SLAUGHTER!

THE CIMMERIAN
HAS BROKEN
FREE!

HE'S FAR STRONGER
THAN WE THOUGHT.
KILL HIM--!

MAYBE YOU WILL-- BUT FIRST,
I'LL SEE YON STAR-STONE
SHATTERED.

FROM ITS
DEPTHS, I
KNOW, CAME
THE WINGED
DEVILS WHICH
SLEW THE
VALIANT
OLAV...

BUT YOU'LL
CALL FORTH
NO MORE
FIENDS FROM
BEYOND---

... NOT WHILE
THERE IS YET
BREATH IN
CONAN'S BODY
...AND
STRENGTH
IN CONAN'S
ARM!

DEATH
TO THE
HARBINGERS
OF HELL!

CONAN'S SIMPLE, BAR-
BARIAN MIND COULD NOT
HAVE GUESSED WHAT
HAPPENS NEXT...AS THE
STAR-STONE STRIKES THE
CHAMBER WALL, AND
ERUPTS IN A BLAZING
PAROXYSM WHICH SCAT-
TERS DEMON AND RAIDER
ALIKE...

...WHILE THE YOUNG CIMMERIAN
SCOOPS UP THE LITHE FORM OF
THE GIRL CALLED TARA... AND
FLEES IN MORTAL TERROR FOR
BOTH THEIR LIVES...!

AND BEHIND THEM, THE *WINGED ONES* FADE SWIFTLY BACK INTO THAT DIM NETHERWORLD WHICH SPANNED THEM, LIKE STRAWS CONSUMED BY A HOLOCAUST---



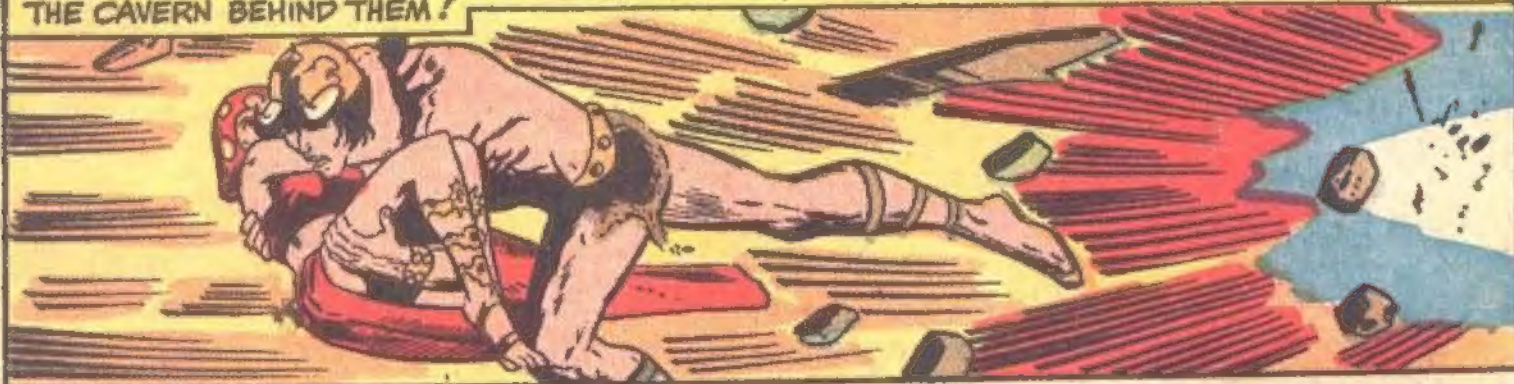
--- WHILE THE DYING *SHAMAN* SHOUTS UNAVAILING SPELLS INTO THE RAGING INFERNO---



---AND *VOLFF THE WILY* LEARNS AT LAST THAT ALL HIS TRICKERY HAS BUT LIGHTED HIS WAY TO *FLAMING DEATH*---



FOR, EVEN AS *CONAN* BEARS HIS LOVELY BURDEN INTO THE OPEN AIR, A *FIERY EXPLOSION* ROCKS THE CAVERN BEHIND THEM!



YOU *FOOL*... YOU *BARBARIAN FOOL*... YOU HAVE *DOOMED ME*...

CURSE THE MOMENT OF WEAKNESS WHEN I FELT *PITY* FOR YOU!

DOOMED? NAY, YOU'RE *SAFE NOW*... OUT OF THAT *MADMAN'S CLUTCHES!*



YOU STILL... DO NOT *COMPREHEND*. BUT YOU *SHALL*... IN A FEW FLEETING MOMENTS...



WHAT ARE YOU *RAVING* ABOUT, WOMAN?

HAVE I *SAVED* YOU FROM THE FIRES WITHIN, ONLY TO HAVE YOU MOUTH *NONSEN*--?



CROM'S DEVILS!

WHAT *VILE SORCERY* IS THIS??





THE FEMALE I CARRIED FROM THE CAVE---

... IS CHANGED INTO ONE OF THE WINGED DEMONS!

SO YOU... WOULD CALL ME, MORTAL...



NOT LONG AGO... THE OLD SHAMAN WHISKED ME... FROM MY UNIVERSE WITHIN THE SHATTERED STAR-STONE...

... TRANSFORMED ME INTO AN EARTHLY HANDMAID, TO LIGHT HIS LONELY DAYS.

BUT HE COULD NOT KEEP ME HERE FOR-E'ER... UNLESS ANOTHER TOOK MY PLACE... IN MY DISTANT WORLD...

AND THAT OTHER WAS TO BE... CONAN?



AY... AND SO YOU KNOW AT LAST... THE SECRET OF THE CEREMONY OF TRANSFERRAL.

BUT NOW... MY OWN COSMOS CALLS ME... TO ENDURE ETERNALLY THE HELLISH FLAMES WHICH FLICKER THERE.

FARE THEE WELL, MORTAL... AND RECALL ONE DAY... THAT TARA FOUND YOU FAIR...



WONDER UPON WONDER!

THE WINGED ONE IS GONE... TO WORLDS WHERE NO MAN CAN FOLLOW.



THEN, THERE IS NO MORE NEED FOR SPOKEN WORDS, FOR NONE ARE LEFT ALIVE TO HEAR THEM. SMOKE POURS FROM THE SHAMAN'S CAVERN, DARK HERALD OF THE DEATH THAT ALL WITHIN HAVE DIED...

NIGHT-WINGED *THOUGHTS* FLIT ACROSS CONAN'S BRAIN
... *MEMORIES* OF THE DREAD DEEDS OF THE DAY JUST
DONE... THE SLAYING OF A VALIANT FRIEND... THE MARVELS
OF AN INVISIBLE WORLD REVEALED... IMAGES OF MANY-
TOWERED CITIES AND DYING CONTINENTS AND... AND...

... AND *KINGS*! AY, WASN'T
THERE SOMETHING ABOUT A
KINGDOM? A VISION OF
CONAN AS *MONARCH* OF
SOME UNGUESSED-AT LAND?

BUT ALREADY THE
IMAGE *FADES*... TOO
LONG AGO AND TOO
FANTASTIC TO TROUBLE
THE MIND OF A YOUTH
WHO HAS NEITHER
DAGGER NOR VENISON
TO SUSTAIN HIM.



THE MOON IS A WHITE, WATCH-
ING EYE... THE JOURNEY HOME
IS HARD... AND THERE ARE
NO REALITIES WORTH THE
WISHING, SAVE *FOOD* AND
A FINELY-WROUGHT *SWORD*.

[FINIS]